

Church of Christ. His example was soon followed by the greater number of his nobles and people.

By degrees, the Faith spread far and wide, and in 601 Augustine received the pallium from Saint Gregory and was given authority over the Celtic churches in Britain, as well as all future bishops consecrated in English territory, including York. Authority over the see of York was not, however, to descend to Augustine's successors. In 603, he consecrated Christ Church, Canterbury, and built the monastery SS. Peter and Paul. Later it would become known as Saint Augustine's. He afterwards consecrated Mellitus and Justus the sees of London and Rochester respectively. He is also known as the Apostle of England.

The only defeat Augustine met with after he came to England was in his attempt to reconcile the Welsh Christians and persuade them to adopt the Roman custom of reckoning the date of Easter, and to correct certain minor irregularities of rite and to submit to his authority. Augustine met the leaders of the Welsh church in what is referred to as the conference of Augustine's Oak, but he unfavorably impressed them by remaining seated when they came into his presence. Before going to the conference, the English bishops had consulted a hermit known for wisdom and holiness and had been advised by him that if Augustine remained seated that he was arrogant and unfit to lead. It would take another sixty years before the breach was healed.

Augustine was neither the most heroic of missionaries, nor the most tactful, but he did a great job, and he was one of the very few men in Gaul or Italy who, at that time, was prepared to give up everything to preach in a far off country. He died after eight years of evangelical labors, but his monks continued them and perpetuated them. The Anglo-Saxon Church which Saint Augustine founded is still famous for its learning, zeal, and devotion to the Holy See. Its calendar commemorates no fewer than three hundred Saints, half of whom were of royal birth. \*(excerpted from: [www.catholicculture.org](http://www.catholicculture.org); [www.magnificat.ca](http://www.magnificat.ca); [www.nndb.com](http://www.nndb.com); // [satucket.com](http://satucket.com))

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## **Saint Augustine of Canterbury**

Feast Day: May 28



**QUOTE:**

**In a letter to Augustine,  
Pope Gregory the Great wrote:  
"He who would climb to a lofty height  
must go by steps,  
not leaps."**

## Saint Augustine of Canterbury

\*Saint Augustine was born in Rome, Italy, date unknown, and died in Canterbury, Kent, England on May 26, 604 AD. His feast day is celebrated on May 28. He was a Benedictine monk who lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and who had great learning and is famous in Christian Literature. He was the first archbishop of Canterbury.

Saint Augustine was prior of the monastery of Saint Andrew on Mount Coelius in Rome, when he was appointed by Saint Gregory the Great as Superior of the forty Benedictine missionaries he was sending to England. Despite the great difficulties involved in the task assigned to him, Augustine and his monks obeyed. The Christian faith of England, more than that of any other nation of Europe, was the fruit of the labors and spiritual conquests of the ministry of monks. Its deepest Christian roots are more ancient than Saint Augustine and his companions, and date from the era of the Apostles. England, in the first century, furnished its contingent of martyrs during the persecution of Diocletian. England sent its bishops to the first Councils held after the religion of Christ became that of the Empire in 313. But in the time of Saint Augustine, the Anglo-Saxon conquest had cut down almost all the branches of the tree.

When Saint Augustine arrived in England, he found ruined churches, scarcely a Christian to be found who could narrate a tradition, attested to the sacrilegious and incendiary hand of paganism, despite the labors of Saint Palladius and Saint Germain d'Auzerre in the fifth century. The last Christian Britons had taken refuge in the mountains of Wales. England, the land of the Angels, had become a land of infamous slave-traders for the continent, including Rome; its merchants did not spare their own people when profit was at stake.

It was in this way that Saint Gregory the Great came to purchase the English boys he saw marketed at the Roman Forum. He raised them in his house, which he transformed into a monastery. Thus, the definitive conversion of England began. In his compassionate heart. When he was in the sixth year of his pontificate he chose the prior of his own monastery for the mission to England. Gregory himself

wished to come to Britain, but his election as pope put an end to that idea. His decision in 596 to send the prior of his own monastery was based on the monk following the comparatively new Rule of Saint Benedict. Augustine set out with his companions and a crisis occurred when they reached southern Gaul (France). His companions heard many reports of the barbarism and ferocity of the pagan English. They were alarmed and wished to turn back. Augustine was sent back to the pope for help who made him abbot and subjected the rest of the party to him in all matters. He told them, "Go on, in God's name! The greater your hardships, the greater your crown. May the grace of Almighty God protect you, and permit me to see the fruit of your labor in the heavenly country! If I cannot share your toil, I shall yet share the harvest, for God knows that it is not good-will which is wanting." With this authority, Augustine successfully reached England in 597.

Landing at Ebbsfleet, they sent ahead of them their translator-emissaries, to say to the king of those lands that they had come from Rome, to announce to him not merely good news, but the Good News of all ages, with its promises of heavenly joy and an eternal reign in the company of the living and true God. They met with the Saxon King Ethelbert who had been reigning for thirty-six years, and with his barons under a great oak tree at Minster in the present county of Kent, and announced to him the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ethelbert was predisposed to listen to the missionaries; his Christian wife, Bertha, was a great-granddaughter of Saint Clothilda and Clovis. He wished to deliberate for a few days nonetheless, and when they returned in procession, chanting and preceded by the Cross, Ethelbert promised only to give them liberty to practice their faith unmolested.

The king gave them a residence in Canterbury and provided for their needs. Their good example brought many to them for instruction and then Baptism, and at Pentecost 597, the Anglo-Saxon king, also, entered into the unity of the